

UNITED STATES ARSENAL AT ST. LOUIS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR

TRANSMITTING

A report of the chief of ordnance, stating objections to the bill now pending for the removal of the arsenal at St. Louis.

FEBRUARY 11, 1861.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *February 9, 1861.*

SIR: I have the honor to enclose to you, for the information of the House of Representatives, a report of the chief of ordnance, communicating certain objections to the bill now pending before that body, providing for the removal of the United States arsenal at St. Louis.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. HOLT,
Secretary of War.

Hon. WM. PENNINGTON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

ORDNANCE OFFICE,
Washington, February 1, 1861.

SIR: I have just seen a copy of House bill No. 132, present session, "to remove the United States arsenal from the city of St. Louis, and to provide for the sale of the lands on which the same is located," and I consider it to be my duty to present to you the following objections to the bill, and to ask such action on your part as you may deem advisable.

The St. Louis arsenal is now the only United States arsenal in the States watered by the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers which is capable of receiving any adequate quantity of ordnance stores, or of

making or repairing such stores ; and if a part of its site should be at once sold, as contemplated by the bill, great inconvenience to its operations will ensue. The erection of the necessary buildings at Jefferson Barracks for receiving the stores and carrying on the operations could not be accomplished in much less than three years, even if there were money now in the treasury already appropriated for that purpose. But it is questionable how far it would be advisable to use the Jefferson Barracks tract for the purpose, not because the United States title to it has been questioned, but because its fitness in a military point of view has been doubted.

The time and manner of sale contemplated by the bill are also, I think, objectionable. There should be no sale till we have removed from the site altogether, as a curtailment of its present dimension will seriously embarrass us. And when we do sell, it should be in but one or two parcels at most, to correspond with the two deeds under which we hold. All deeds heretofore made by the United States for arsenal sites, abandoned and sold in pursuance of law, have conveyed only "all the right, title, and interest of the United States" in the same, according to the boundaries described and quoted from the deeds under which we hold. The only departure from this was in the sale of a portion of the lands of the United States armory at Harper's Ferry in 1852, which we divided into town lots; and of the 160 separate purchases then made, 42 are still delinquent of payment in full.

I think that the only way to avoid embarrassment to the public service in breaking up the present arsenal will be for Congress to pass an act authorizing the President to procure some suitable site in the State of Missouri or Illinois, and to cause to be erected thereon an arsenal of construction ; and appropriate for that purpose, in three annual instalments, the sum of \$300,000. And further enacting that as soon as such arsenal shall be in a condition to receive the stores from the present United States arsenal in St. Louis, the same shall be removed thereto, and the St. Louis arsenal be sold at public auction, and the proceeds thereof be paid into the United States treasury

The copy of the bill referred to is herewith enclosed.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. K. CRAIG,
Colonel of Ordnance.

Hon. J. HOLT,
Secretary of War.